



MEMORANDUM

Date: May 14, 2009
To: Anne Krieg
From: Kris Hultgren
Re: Town Hill Mini-Plan

Please accept this memo as explanation of the process to develop the Town Hill Mini-plan and the accompanying Land Use Ordinance amendments. A copy of the Mini-plan is part of this packet.

The Comprehensive Plan Update passed by the voters in 2007 called for an additional planning process in Town Hill to address a set of unresolved issues. These issues included natural resource protection, village form and pedestrian safety, among others. The Town Hill Mini-plan is the result of the planning process aimed at addressing these unresolved issues.

Planning Process

The Town Hill Mini-plan process began with a series of meetings in the spring and summer of 2008. The intent of the initial meetings was to lay the ground work for future decision making by listening to residents about the issues most important to them. Planning staff worked with a land use planning class from the College of the Atlantic to review community assets and historical development patterns to help residents better understand the scope of the planning project.

The planning process continued into the fall of 2008 with multiple public workshops used to review community feedback and discuss the framework for the village design plan. To assist in this effort staff produced an interim report that detailed public comment and noted issues receiving general agreement among community members. This included transportation and pedestrian improvements, groundwater protection and preserving village character and scale.

Guiding Principles

As the process continued into the winter of 2009 a set of guiding principles emerged. The principles used to develop the initial concept design plan for the Town Hill Village area were improving pedestrian safety by reducing traffic speed through the village, honoring existing scale and protecting natural resources and open space. Planning staff and its design team unveiled the concept design plan at a public workshop in January. The plan included a village boundary and various design elements used to implement the community vision based on the guiding principles. The design elements included compact mixed use development, reduced setbacks, interconnected local roads, preservation of open space, tree-lined streets, pedestrian amenities and various landscaping improvements. Planning staff reviewed the concept plan with the public and made changes based on resident feedback.

***Memorandum
Town of Bar Harbor
Planning Department***

Minor changes were made to the initial concept design plan and an updated plan was presented to the public at a community design charrette in February. Approximately 100 residents working in small groups presented feedback to planning staff and the design consultants to make further updates to the plan. The updates included adding more open space to the plan, shielding large scale developments from public ways and adding more landscaping features.

Based on the feedback from the design charrette and subsequent meetings with residents, planning staff concluded that the design principles used to create the vision for the Town Hill Village were largely endorsed by community members. The design features like mixed use development, pedestrian amenities and traffic calming measures were well received by the group; however, the number of interconnected streets shown on the plan raised concern with some people. All things considered, most residents were pleased with the outcome of the village design plan.

Conclusion

The major components of the plan include the compact nature of the village design and the greenbelt district surrounding the village area. The land use pattern proposed in the village area addresses the issues noted by the public. For instance, the safety of pedestrians is addressed with traffic calming measures like reduced setbacks, sidewalks and crosswalks. More open space protection is created through the proposed greenbelt district. And the future scale of development and neighborhood character are protected by extending the Design Review Board jurisdiction to Town Hill. Overall, planning staff believes the Town Hill Village Mini-plan appropriately addresses the unresolved issues from the Comprehensive Plan process by implementing a community vision for Town Hill based on a set of guiding principles developed through a public participatory process.

I am available to attend the May 19 Town Council meeting to answer questions.

- Kris